2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
FR5 Ngoni FR5

considered it his individual bad luck. On the other hand the house which depended on its herd for mutual help among its members and for the performance of ritual in sickness was deeply concerned at the loss of cattle and at any diminution of its herd. 231 556

After security, pleasure and emotional satisfaction were important Ngoni values in relation to cattle. This outlet for interest and enjoyment was very marked among Ngoni men. It began with the young herd-boys and continued until old age. Cattle were an endless topic for discussion, and in remote areas, where few strangers came and local affairs played a predominant part in village life, the fortunes of individual beasts and the progress of herds were talked about continuously. The advent of a letter from a son in the south sending money to his father to buy a beast gave a fillip to village life which little else provided. When the young men themselves came home, they went during their first evening to the kraal where the cattle they had paid for were kept, and showed interest and pleasure in the herd which was shared by all. The older men who had carried the responsibility were there, and on the fringes of the group the herd-boys hung around, listening to their elders, proud of having done their bit for the cattle which were the common concern of all three age-groups.

The Ngoni were aware that security in their cattle and the pleasure they got from them had to be won, and there was a price to pay. Hence they attached great value to knowledge and experience and to the ability to organise. Among the senior men responsible for a herd in a house or *kunja*, some would be known for their knowledge and skill in handling cattle and for their experience in dealing with sick beasts, in castrating bullocks, and in choosing well when buying new beasts. The Ngoni recognised an innate quality of skill, which they called *mphumi wabwino*, 'the good forehead', a term used as an equivalent for the 'green thumb' when talking about crops. They also recognised the knowledge which came from experience and which might or might not be associated with *mphumi wabwino*. In any village where there were cattle, men were pointed out who possessed knowledge about cattle-tending, and the choice of a neighbouring village kraal for boarding out purposes was generally decided on the reputation of the owner of the kraal as a good cattle man. Not all the people who had this specialised knowledge had ability to organise the care of cattle, a characteristic Ngoni quality on [illegible] a high value. Foresight and planning were necessary in the choice of kraals for boarding out, in the selection of animals for *lobola*, fines, gifts or slaughter, and above all in buying and selling cattle. This kind of organising ability required the possession of information about local markets and about potential sellers or buyers of cattle. It also demanded some nice calculations when sending cattle for *lobola* or giving a beast as a gift. Men were often torn between wishing to appear generous to the point of lavishness, and not wanting to give [illegible] 231 555

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
FR5 Ngoni FR5

away the prize animals in the herd. Their formula in presenting a beast was 'Here is a small sheep.' This belittling of a gift was the social counterpart of their inner desire for a reputation for generosity.

It has been clear from many previous references that mutual assistance among members of a house was inherent in the social pattern of cattle-ownership. The Ngoni attached great value to this reciprocity of service, and it was deeply embedded in their social ethic. Young men in Ngoni villages thought twice before they deliberately took action which would bring them into the courts, because the fine would have to be paid by their elders from the common herd of cattle. The implications of this service proved no ultimate deterrent to hot-headed youth, but the lesson was constantly being rubbed in. After a court case for adultery, when a young man's father and his father's brothers had handed over a beast for a fine, they would grumble in the evening by the kraal at this waste of good cattle, and suggest it was time the young man went off to the south and sent money home to buy more cattle. This was the cycle of mutual help—the elders provided cattle from the herd for *lobola* and fines for the young men, who in turn went off to work and sent back money to buy more cattle. Reference has been made to 'the cloth of the spirits', when cattle were sold to provide cash for a young man who needed it, and the balance was used to buy cloth which was kept in the hut where the ancestral spirit was guarded. This cloth was the common property of all who belonged to the house owning the herd, and was returnable to the hut after it had been worn for some festive occasion. The forms which this mutual help could take were numerous and varied, and they all illustrated the fact that the correct and continuous observance of this reciprocity was considered by the Ngoni as one of the basic values underlying the ownership and use of cattle.

Among the group bound together by cattle-ownership this emphasis on mutual help as a desirable behaviour pattern had its counterpart in the social concept of integration. As we have seen, the Ngoni put a high value on 'staying together', on being united when challenged by a situation which made for disintegration. Within the social units of the house and family, the ownership of cattle and their care and use demanded some degree of co-operation through responsibility for the herd which was held in common. Integration between the living and their ancestors was also provided by the cattle. Common possession of a herd did more than just hold people together. The pattern of family and house organization which was characteristically Ngoni was given some stability through the ownership of cattle, allowing for the subdivision of herds when the new village 'went out', the exchanges at marriage, and the sacrifices at death.

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

siderable latent, and at times overt, antagonism from the younger towards the older group. This was to some extent mitigated by the dominant interest as well as occupation in cattle-herding. The head herd-boys were people of importance, called in for consultations with the adults who were cattle-owners. They assisted at the killing of beasts and went with them to market when beasts were sold. These older boys, despite their dominance, were heroes to the younger ones, and basked in an aura of hero-worship. They took good care to build up their claims to be thought of as 'big ones', with proven feats of strength, vaunted knowledge about cattle, skill in leading dances, and reputations as lady-killers.

The younger boys found some outlet for their aggressive impulses in the stick fighting, which was a recognized sport. They fought with 'rods', like single-sticks, and became adept at attack and defence. It was alleged that in the old days there was no redress for broken heads or bruises. As the elders said: 'They were learning to fight when young. There was no man ignorant of this learning. This school for fighting made strength in the body.' The clash of sticks could be heard out on the grazing grounds by day or in the evening on the edge of the village when the cattle were safely in the kraal. Skill in stick-fighting was one of the ways in which leadership among the younger boys was acknowledged. It was a kind of knock-out championship, hotly contested, until everyone agreed: 'That one—he has excelled.' Boys going to school took their sticks and knobkerries with them in case they were challenged on the path, but they were careful to hide them in the bushes just before arriving at the school.

Boys' life in the village

When the boys went to live in the dormitory they did not only escape from the women's world into a boys' circle. They entered the fringe of the men's world and provided they conducted themselves with propriety they could sit on the edge of the men's group at the kraal gate and listen to talk about men's affairs.

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

572 than dissolved. The element of secrecy in the confidence exchanged gave the girls a much-needed sense of privacy, and the freedom of being able to say anything to the friend was a relief from the constant guard on speech and manners.

535 The girls had dance-groups, and practised dancing in or near a compound. Each group had an 'owner' who called 571 the others together and organized the dancing. These were several dance-groups, in contrast with the boys' single group, [578] and the girls' groups were often rent by internal quarrels, leading to splits in the groups.

865 The dance-groups, and other little knots of girls, often had violent quarrels in which all their latent aggression came to the surface. They shouted at each other, scratched each other's faces and burst into tears of anger and frustration. If senior Ngoni women were around when these scenes took place, they generally broke in and rebuked the 'owner' of the group and sent them all home. Sometimes they deliberately turned their backs, leaving the girls to fight it out among themselves, or hoping the 'owner' would restore order. The senior women, rather unobtrusively as a rule, kept an eye on the girls in their dance-groups and at other times, and were adept at summing up their characters and looking out for signs of leadership and of ability to control others.

157 One type of leadership was often shown when a girl collect-538 ed younger children together, for singing, games or for telling stories in a recitative form with a refrain in which the 555 others joined. There was a certain kind of skill in reciting these stories, recognized alike by the children listening and by adults watching from a distance. The Ngoni believed that this skill was due to a gift for eloquence, not so far removed from the eloquence of the man who chanted the praises of the chiefs, or the man who composed his own songs. This eloquence was said to come 'from the chest'. Ngoni men and women passing a group of children spellbound at the recital of a story would say: 'Ha! look at that one. She has that which is of the chest—real eloquence.'

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

the older herd-boys when they were discussing 'cattle problems' in the evening. They took them into the kraal and showed them signs of the cattle not being well from the condition of the skin, udders, hoofs and mouth. The older boys were also called to be present if medicine was given to cattle, either some specific known to the owners, or treatment given by a 'specialist' called in, who might have real skill and knowledge about sick animals or be trying his luck with secret remedies known only to himself. The herd-boys were taught to notice the condition of other cattle than the ones of which they had charge, and to report on them. These might be cattle in other villages, or cattle belonging to their father's house 'boarded out' in another kraal according to Ngoni practice. The older herd-boys went with their father and his brothers to local markets where cattle were bought and sold, and listened to arguments about their condition which could make a difference of several pounds in the price they fetched.

When it had been decided in the village to kill a beast, for eating, or for selling the meat, or for a sacrifice, it was usually a young adult who was called to spear the animal. Some young men became adept at planting the spear behind the left shoulder in such a way that the beast dropped dead at once. At times two or more stabs were necessary, but it was a matter of pride and no small skill to succeed the first time. The senior herd-boys, who had driven the animal out of the kraal after separating it from its fellows, stood close round and watched attentively, for the stab had to be both accurate and forceful. The reputation of being skilful at killing a beast, of being a 'one stab' man, was greatly desired by herd-boys. They coveted equally the reputation of being skilful at flaying the beast. With carefully sharpened knives, in a few quick deft strokes, the young men slit the skin, opened it up and began to cut up the carcase. Like assistants at a surgical operation, the senior herd-boys held the knives, lifted a limb, turned back the skin, collected the blood, removed the

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

224 After the hunt the tally of kills was reckoned up, the game was carried home by the young men, and on the return to [262] the villages the meat was cooked and eaten by the men at the kraal gate. This was the occasion for going over all [521] the episodes of the chase, the skill of So-and-so, the fine organizing of the hunt by its 'owner'. No one mentioned the misses, no one's feelings were hurt, and there was a warm feeling of united and contented sharing in a good day's sport.

Lion-hunting was organized differently. Only former warriors and well-known huntsmen were called, and they sometimes took their sons with them as carriers. Guns as well as spears were taken, though the Ngoni liked to say, and it was often true, that they killed lions with spears only. Tracking a lion was dangerous and difficult, and when it was located in a patch of tall grass or reeds, the huntsmen made a circle round it, ready to attack when it broke cover. As in the chase, the one who stabbed the lion first, second and finally was noted. The dead lion was hoisted on poles slung from the shoulders of young men, and carried to the village where the hunt was organized. Here the party was welcomed and given food, the heroes were acclaimed, and the headman and seniors led the way to the village of the clan head, who called his men together to rejoice. When the augmented party reached the chief's or Paramount's village, [535] where all lions had to be taken, a war-dance took place in [555] the kraal, as of warriors returning from a campaign. The killer of the lion came out in front of the rest and danced his individual war-dance; he was hailed as a hero and new [273] epithets were added to his praise names. The whole party [574] was given beer, a beast was killed for a meat feast, and then the party thanked the Paramount in traditional fashion and went home.

It was in lion-hunting that young adults who were taken along felt the spice of danger, the thrill of success, and witnessed the pride of recognition for the successful killer by